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TAGA SPORTS

JULY - SEPTEMBER 2012

WATER POLO MAKES A COMEBACK

THE RANGAMARS: A FAMILY AFFAIR

Q&A

FRANK 'THE CRANK' COMES CLEAN

SURVIVING MY FIRST PAINTBALL GAME

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Pick-up games in the Rangamar family must be quite interesting. It's unusual enough to have siblings involved in the same sport but to have an entire family playing at a competitive level, that must put a colossal amount of pressure on 4-year-old Bwilitomwar and 6-year-old Neisuupi to measure up to older sisters Lei, Rachel, and Lia. It's fortunate for them that they have coach Eli, aka Dad, and mom Dolores, herself an outstanding player, providing the voices of reason and calm—and the refereeing that is surely needed from time to time. This edition of TAGA *Sports* takes a look at one of the more remarkable families in the Commonwealth and the inbred athleticism that has made them a standout both on and off the court. ***Story starts on Page 12***

We finally got around to doing a Q&A feature on Frank "The Crank" Camacho, one of the more celebrated mixed martial arts fighters in the local scene. We've been trying to pin down Frank for a lengthier feature but his busy schedule and off-island career have been stymieing that effort. Based on previous write-ups about Frank, he appears to be not only an outstanding athlete but also a stand-up good guy, with a wicked sense of humor and a penchant for goofing around with friends and family. Nowhere is this more evident than in this edition's interview with "The Crank." ***Story starts on Page 8***

MARC SORIANO

After more than a year of doing this magazine, we haven't even gotten close to running out of stories yet. In fact, we feel like we're falling far behind on a lot of stories and the recent entry of two sports—water polo and paintball—into the local sports scene only intensifies that feeling. What's more puzzling is the fact that water polo is just being revived now. The fact that we are surrounded by the biggest ocean in the world would have you thinking that we should have invented the sport! Anyhow, TAGA *Sports* is privileged to have a small role in spreading the word about this newest effort to drum up interest in water polo. ***Story starts on Page 18***

The same is true with paintball, which is also trying to reinvent itself with "woodsball" games in As Matuis. The shoot-'em-up-style of "capture the flag" competitions in the '80s has evolved into a sort of *Hunger Games*, with teams picking off one another in a jungle setting. Only the scenario has changed; the adrenaline rush remains the same. And the sting of being hit is just as painful as it was three decades ago. ***See story on Page 22***

Again, for comments, violent reactions, criticisms, and suggestions for future issues, shoot us an email at editor@saipantribune.com and we'd be sure to consider them in future editions of TAGA *Sports*.

JAYVEE VALLEJERA
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Editor

COVER ART
CNMI swimmer Rezne Wong and Saipan Swim Club coach Jeff El-Hajj battle for the ball in a water polo scrimmage at the Kan Pacific Swimming Pool in Marpi.

Photography by
ROSELYN MONROYO

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WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Long before Ji Hoon Heo and Thea Minor wowed tennis sages in the region, there was Jungmun Chung. MARK RABAGO

WRITERS BLOC

ROSELYN MONROYO
Watching basketball on TV over dinner is a family affair for Roselyn's family. She remembers her mother fuming mad every time 7-footer E.J. Feihl (a former pro player in the Philippines) fumbles or trip on his way to the basket—calling him "lampa" (clumsy). Roselyn's late father used to say it was a mortal sin in their time to miss free throws—when Rick Barry' underhand free throw shooting was the talk of the town. At the end of the game when the family's team lost, Roselyn would go over what went wrong while washing the dishes.

MARK RABAGO
Mark covered Jungmun Chung and the rest of the CNMI delegation in the 2003 South Pacific Mini Games in Suva, Fiji. His only martial arts experience was when he signed up for judo and Hwa Rang Do classes in college. The first and only time Mark went fishing on Saipan was when J.M. Guerrero invited him and a couple of *Saipan Tribune* staffers to a day's adventure on his fishing boat.

WALTER CEPEDA SUTHERLAND
Walter has been in a slump both at the bowling alley and on the baseball diamond where he is currently riding the pine for SMLBA's Masters team, but is looking forward to the upcoming company basketball season because maybe some more running is just what the doctor ordered for his conditioning. He also hopes to get an up-close-and-personal experience in the upcoming International Fishing Derby after returning from cheering on the CNMI in this month's Little League ASPAC regional in Guam.

BACK TALK

The April-June edition of TAGA *Sports* magazine is the best you've ever done. And if you haven't entered it in every kind of journalistic competition, you're missing a great opportunity for recognition…because this is one of the very best publications I have ever seen. You've really outdone yourselves. And I'm one of the benefactors. Thank you very much.

Gary A Liddle

Email letters to the editor to editor@saipantribune.com or mail to PMB 34, P.O. Box 10001, Saipan MP 96950. Submissions to TAGA *Sports* must include the writer's name, village address (no P.O. boxes), and daytime phone or mobile number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity and may be published or used in any medium. All submissions become the property of the publication and will not be returned.

GETTING IN GEAR

Going fishing?

MARK RABAGO
TAGA *Sports* Associate Editor

A combination of being surrounded by water and plenty of free time during weekends made it inevitable: Many island residents are picking up fishing as a hobby.

And for those with the itch to fish, Fishing Tackle and Sporting Goods is there to supply all their needs.

The store is a jungle of fishing equipment—from the huge selection of rod and reels that greet customers as they enter,

to the hooks, lines, sinkers, nets, spear guns, and other related gear associated with piscatory pursuits that are displayed all over the place.

The fishing equipment store has actually been in business since 1976 at the quaint Style Center building, a stone's throw away from the Mt. Carmel Church and a five-minute walk from Sugar Dock.

Managed by the husband-and-wife team of Pierre Lam and Catherine Flores Lam, who took over the business from pioneer Augustine Flores, Fishing Tackle is the one-stop shop for fishing equipment on island.

"For many, fishing is a way of life on the islands and Fishing Tackle and Sporting Goods is committed to offer the best products at the lowest prices along with outstanding customer service," said the Lams.

Aside from quality and reasonable price, what sets Fishing Tackle apart is its customer service.

"Our enthusiastic and well-trained staff is available to assist you no matter what activity you have in mind. Can't find what you want? We'll stop what we are doing and place a special order for the item you're after. We stand behind our products because we use them too. Like you, we want equipment we can rely on when fishing, diving, or on the field or court. That's why we're the best place [on] Saipan to come to for advice—from one enthusiast to another," they said.

Fishing Tackle sells a wide array of equipment and top brands like Shimano, Sea Horse Hawaii, American Fishing Wire, Kaki Lures, Ugly Sticks, Daiwa, Maputo, Plano, Kastmasters, Beuchat, and Sevenstrand. It's also the exclusive distributor of Penn Reels and Elec-Tra-Mate.

In addition to their broad selection of products, Fishing Tackle is also a source for personal assistance—tips on how customers can get the most out of their gear, repair of damaged equipment, and regular maintenance.

"That's why all our customers always leave our store happy, content, and with a big smile," said operations manager Leo Nardo, who has been with Fishing Tackle since 1994.

The store also sells equipment for baseball, basketball, football, soccer, tennis, volleyball, weight training, billiards, badminton, and boxing.

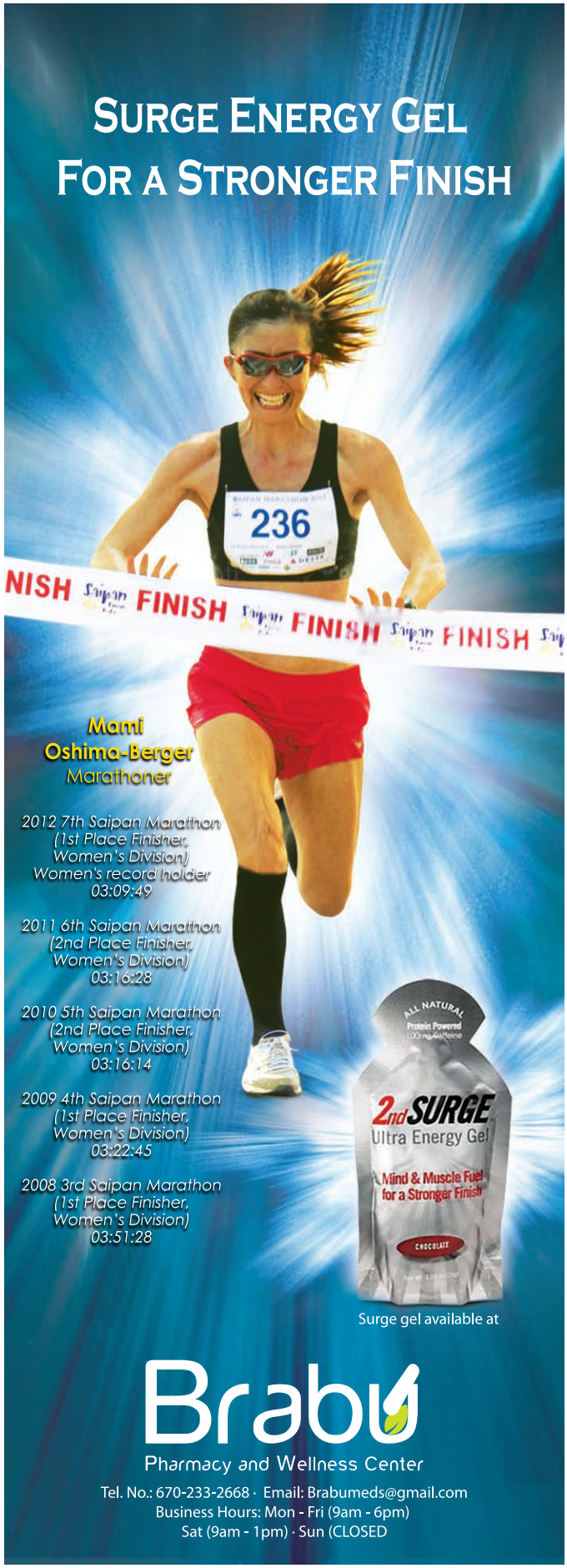
"We're not only a fishing shop but a sports hobby shop as well," said accountant Sally Bartolata.

Fishing Tackle is open from 9am to 7pm Monday to Saturday and 9am to 4pm on Sundays.

For more information about Fishing Tackle and Sporting Goods, call 234-6320 or email info@fishingtackle-saipan.com.

LESLIE REYES

Top photo opposite page, Fishing Tackle and Sporting Goods staff Daniel Marzan fixes the store's speargun display. Bottom photo opposite page, 18-year employee Leo Nardo shows off some of the store many lures. Above, Fishing Tackle and Sporting Goods is a stone's throw away from the Mt. Carmel Church at the landmark Style Center building.



KARATE FOR kids

MARK RABAGO

TAGA *Sports* Associate Editor

LESLIE REYES

TOP: Kyokushinkai Karate Watanabe Dojo co-instructor Nilo Rabino shows first-timer Richard Steele the proper kicking form.
ABOVE: Dojo owner and 7th dan karate black belt Danny Banez, left, poses with his students.

Looking for something your kids can do while school is out this summer? Scoot down to Paseo de Marianas and enroll them at the Kyokushinkai Karate Watanabe Dojo.

Karate instructor and dojo owner Danny Bañez said that enrollment is open for students from 6 years old to 106.

Bañez teaches Kyokushinkai, which is a style of stand-up, full contact karate founded in 1964 by Korean-Japanese karate master Masutatsu Oyama. It is rooted in a philosophy of self-improvement, discipline, and hard training.

A 7th dan karate black belt, Bañez currently has 24 students—mostly children—at his dojo on the second floor of the Me-Tenth Building in Garapan.

He expects enrollment to increase these summer months, as parents enroll their children for karate lessons, which he said will not only teach them discipline, respect, patience, and self-defense but also make them healthy and fit.

The 56-year-old Bañez used to teach martial arts at the former Saipan Karate-do but he moved his dojo to Paseo de Marianas and changed its name after being affiliated with the Watanabe Dojo of Japan.

He is an expert in various martial arts, including Okinawan karate, Shotokan, Arnis Di Mano, and Kuntaw.

Bañez said he started teaching karate on Saipan in 1990 and his dojo peaked in the mid-1990s when he averaged 60-70 students. He said he owes a lot to Joe Sablan for the growth of his dojo.

Some of the students who have earned black belts under his watch are police officer and mixed martial arts fighter Jason Tarkong, Eric Atalig, Corrections' Alex Sablan and Pius Yarutimal, and his current co-instructor, Nilo Rabino.

The youngest black belt in his dojo right now is 9-year-old Roger Valencia, who started learning karate at the tender age of 6. Bañez explains that it's always better to start children at a young age because their minds and bodies are still developing.

Aside from periodic sparring sessions, Kyokushinkai Karate also promotes students every quarter and Bañez wants his wards to take part in local and off-island competitions in the future.

By his own estimates, only 10 out of 100 karate beginners get to earn a black belt, while 20-30 percent get to the brown belt level. Half of the 100, though, get to achieve green belt.

Karate lessons at Kyokushinkai Karate cost only $50 a month and sessions are held thrice a week—Monday, Wednesday, and Friday—from 6:30pm to 8pm. For more information, call 989-5524 or 233-3264.

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Frank 'The Crank' Camacho

WALTER CEPEDA SUTHERLAND
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

Saipan mixed martial artist Frank "The Crank" Camacho just participated in the 2012 Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu World Championships in Long Beach, Calif. last month and he unveiled plans to get back in the cage sometime this year.

Camacho is a professional MMA-BJJ athlete who trains with Team Lloyd Irvin America's jiu-jitsu team in Camp Springs, Maryland. He holds a purple belt in Brazilian jiu-jitsu.

He made it through two rounds with a pair of kimura submissions in the recent BJJ Mundials competition where he competed in the 194-lb purple belt division but unfortunately lost his third match via points. About 80 competitors made up the field.

He also was fortunate enough to travel to Las Vegas, Nevada, where he trained with Ultimate Fighter Championship's Alexander Gufstafson, Brandon Vera, UFC's 135-lb champion Dominick Cruz, Mike Easton, Jeremy Stephens, Ross Pearson, and Mike Chandler, to name a few.

Taking advantage of all his experiences, Camacho shares with aspiring MMA athletes in the CNMI the level of dedication it takes to be among the elite in his career field.

Q: Please describe a regular week's worth of training.

A: My fight camp and off-season schedules are very different for me and the way my team does things during the season.

The off-season, when I have no fights coming up, is the time when I learn different techniques in all of the arts. My game is critiqued and I try to build up my strength and power, etc.

Currently, my daily schedule includes boxing from 10am to 11am followed by Brazilian jiu-jitsu from 11:30am to 1pm.

Then I take a break and conduct various drills from 4:30pm to 5:30pm followed by pro MMA training from 7:30pm to 9pm.

In addition, on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays we have strength and conditioning class with our coach, D'Angelo Kinard, of advanced sports performance.com. He comes in and works us to death for an hour and I love it!

Basically, we have up to four training sessions daily from Monday through Thursday with up to two on Fridays and Saturdays; Sunday is my only rest day.

Master Lloyd Irvin also brings in a number of different experts with different specializations to work with us.

If we incur any injuries or tweaks we see our team doctor, Dr. Rick Rosa of recoverydoc.org.

We also participate in various fight camps in preparation for any upcoming bouts to help "sharpen out swords."

Surprisingly, I don't do as much running as I should, but our strength and conditioning coaches usually put us through interval

sprints on the treadmill to simulate anaerobic work, much like one undergoes when in a real fight.

I also undergo full-contact MMA sparring sessions three times a week, usually on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays and we usually do jiu-jitsu sparring or wrestling aka "rolling" everyday.

When we exhibit full contact MMA sparring, we use full gear. As professionals we don't mess around. We use headgear, mouthpieces, hand wraps, 16-oz. gloves, shin guards, and a whole lot of guts!

A lot of amateurs don't like using full gear, but I don't agree with that. When we spar we go 110 percent. And every punch and kick is thrown as if it is a real fight so without the proper gear and guidance people can get seriously injured.

Q: Tell us about your diet—how carefully do you watch what you eat?

A: Basically, if it doesn't grow naturally then I try not to eat it and if it's in a package, I don't usually eat it.

Q: What do you like to drink?

A: WATER, WATER, WATER!...did I mention WATER?

Q: What are some of your favorite foods?

A: Chamorro food, baby! I love my mom's *estufau* and my *nina's* shrimp *kelaguen*! Yummy! Chamorro BBQ!

Q: What are your favorite foods when you are allowed to cheat on the diet, like on special occasions?

A: Oh snap! I was waiting for this question to come up. I have a very bad sweet tooth. If I could eat anything and not worry about weight or health it would be ice cream (I think I'm going to have some ice cream right now—shhhhhh! Don't tell).

Q: Describe the difference between competing as a blue belt versus your recent purple belt competitions?

A: At purple belt, you get guys that are better at "their positions" and are more aware of their game, but all in all, I feel it's nearly the same.

Q: Since your anticipated July fight fell through, what is your main goal for 2012, or even 2013 or later if that's what it takes to achieve your goal?

A: My goal is to be the UFC 155-lb champion. My goal for 2012 is to fight in the UFC.

Q: Any other events/competitions lined up this year?

A: I'm trying to compete in every tournament I can this year.

Q: Do you take yoga or enjoy playing any sports in your free time?

A: I've tried doing yoga for a little bit and would like to do more because it definitely helps. However, during my free time I'm usually hanging out with my team or relaxing.

Q: Any interesting hobbies?

A: I love making videos and graphic design from time to time and enjoy playing my ukulele. When I come home for visits I love going to the ocean.

Q: What do you do when you don't train—do you have a day job?

A: I do some graphic design and video production for Master Lloyd and the MMA Academy.

Q: When are you planning another visit home?

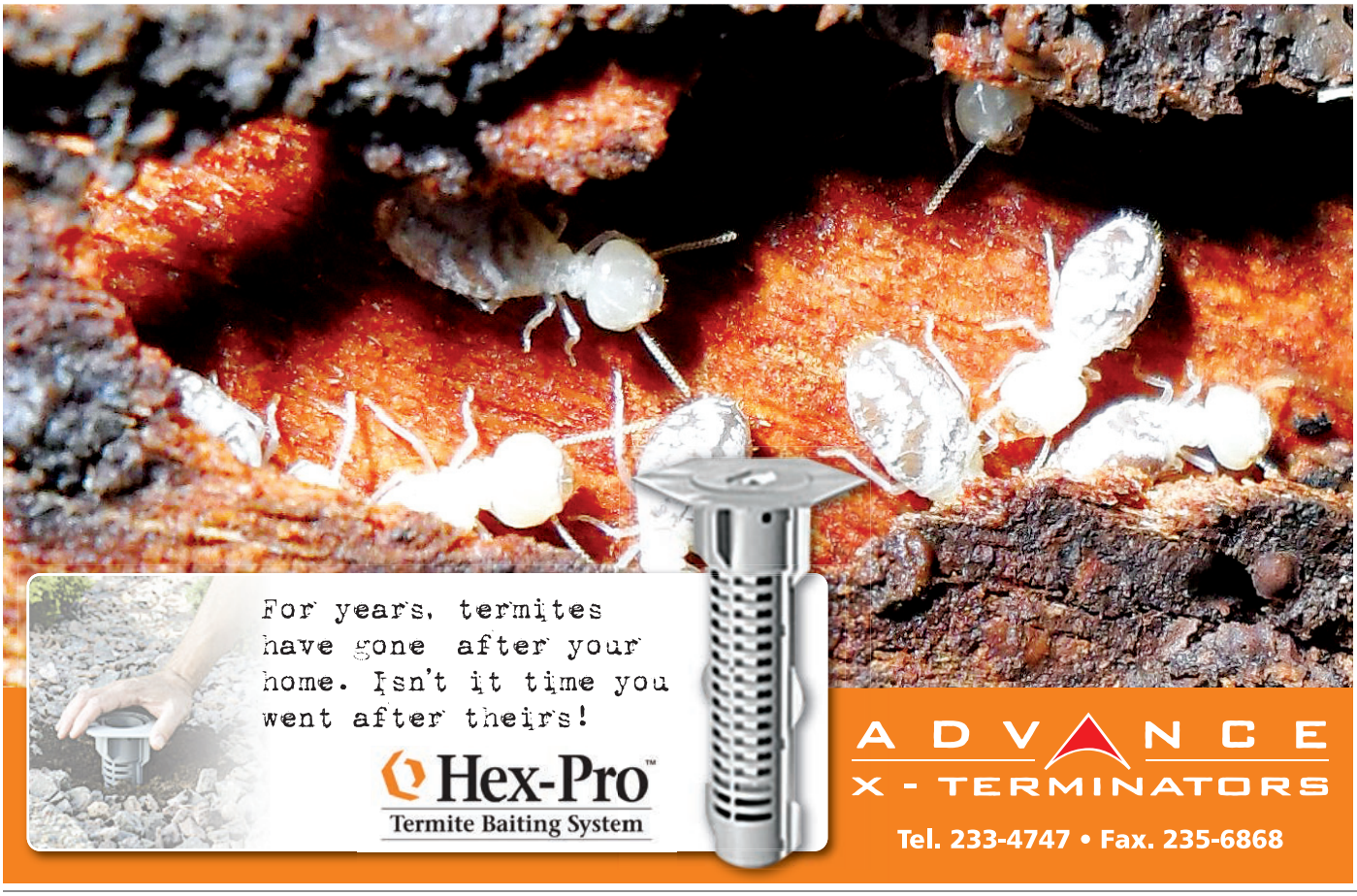
A: I try to come back for a visit every year.

Q: Is there anything else you want to add?

A: Well, I have a girlfriend now and she is freakin' awesome! Being a martial artist and fighter, the lifestyle is very different as everything in my life is so focused on this one goal of being a UFC champion, and she has been super supportive.

Q: Is there any other message you want to send to our readers?

A: Keep on keeping on! Work hard at whatever is important in your life. Hard work will always beat talent when talent refuses to work hard. I'm truly blessed to be in the position where I am now. In the beginning of my career, I didn't have much support getting into MMA as far as doing it for a living, but without the support of my parents, sister, and family I wouldn't be where I'm at. Being out here away from home, every day and every second makes me want to train harder and push more to represent the Marianas. I also want to let the kids know that it's OK to dream big in whatever you want to do—I know I say this all the time but it's true! *Sen dangkulu na si yuus maase para todu!*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CREAM OF THE CROP

Athletics' Rachel Abrams and Yvonne Bennett, baseball's Joshua Jones, and tennis' Rafael Jones were named the Commonwealth's top athletes for 2011 during the NMASA Sports Banquet early this year, joining the elite group of athletes who have brought honors to the CNMI. These four athletes look back, remembering the ups and downs in their young career and how they became the cream of the crop.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

JOSH JONES

2011 NMASA Male Athlete of the Year

"We came up short in the 2010 Micronesian Games in Palau, losing to the host in the finals. We started strong and I pitched against archrival Guam twice and won both games to advance to the finals. I pitched only three innings in the gold medal game and the damage was done, we lost, 7-3.

"I suited up for the CNMI Team again in 2011 and played in the Pacific Games in New Caledonia. We won the gold. The first game was against Palau and we avenged our Micro Games loss, 1-0. I had 14 strikeouts. We had a 3-2 record in the elimination and almost did not make it to the playoffs. We faced New Caledonia in a do-or-die game, I pitched the last three innings and we won, 11-5. After two hours, we faced Palau. I pitched nine innings, gave up only one hit and we won again, 8-0, to advance to the finals against Guam. I did not start in the gold medal game the next day, came in the third inning, and led the CNMI to an 8-4 win. It was the CNMI's first gold medal in baseball in the Pacific Games.

"Next to baseball, I love volleyball and we (Kagman High School) won four years in a row in MISO. We won in my freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior year. I played a lot of volleyball in four years and the hard work paid off."

YVONNE BENNETT

2011 NMASA Female Athlete of the Year

"I competed for the first time in the All Schools Championship in 2005. I did the 100-meter run and 4x100-meter relay and did not even know how to use the starting block and what spikes are. After 15 seconds of running, I was worried someone was going to pass me. I won and also anchored the team in the relay. A week later, I and Yvette joined the CNMI track team.

"In 2010, I was with the CNMI track and basketball teams that competed in the Micronesian Games in Palau. Having to juggle two sports for a week was a challenge but worth it. I set personal, CNMI, and Micronesian records in the 100-meter and 200-meter races, helped the team won in relays, and played in the finals in basketball where we finished second to Guam.

"I debuted in a collegiate meet in 2011 during the Western Athletic Conference Indoor Championships in Nampa, Idaho. I was scheduled to compete in the 400-meter race and it was the event I have always been scared of. I ran 57.07 seconds, a personal best in indoor. I was convinced I could run the 400-meter without passing out. Later I ran third leg in the 4x400-meter relay, had a split of 55 seconds, and helped the team break the school's 23-year-old record."

RAFAEL JONES

2011 TSL Foundation/NMASA Male Student Athlete of the Year

"My first official tennis match was 6-0, 6-0. I lost. In 2007, I tried to win in the NPQ, but lost to Jake Lee in the semis. We met again in 2008 and I was down, 2-5, but I still won and qualified to play in Fiji for the first time.

"In 2008, I was invited to play in New Zealand where I really got a taste of international competition. I won a couple of matches but definitely had more losses than wins. After my trip to New Zealand, I really started to make tennis a priority and a part of my daily routine.

"After placing only No. 12 in the 2010 Pacific Oceania Junior Championships, I made it to the semis in 2011 and was qualified to join the Pacific Touring Team that competed in a series of tournaments in Australia in early 2012. In Australia, I played quality matches and later got a whole bunch of signatures from the pros while watching the Australian Open."

RACHEL ABRAMS

2011 TSL Foundation/NMASA Female Student Athlete of the Year

"I had my very first 100-meter race when I think I was 8. There were many lanes, I didn't know where to go, so I just stood there, waited for the whistle, and ran as fast as I could. Then after about 70 meters of running and I was in the lead, I slowed down. Later my mom told me not to slow down, just keep running.

"I first joined a basketball team in the middle of the season when I was a freshman. When they put me in the game, I could only run and get rebounds. When I got the ball, I threw it back. I was fouled a lot and I missed all six free throws. We lost. I will always remember that game because it reminds me how far I have gone and how much I've improved. That motivates me to get better. (Abrams is now among the top U17 players in the CNMI).

"I represented the CNMI in the Pacific Games last year and ran in the 100-meter and 200-meter races. I was really nervous during the 200-meter, but I managed to finish second, post a personal best time, and made it to the finals. It was one of my proudest moments." TG

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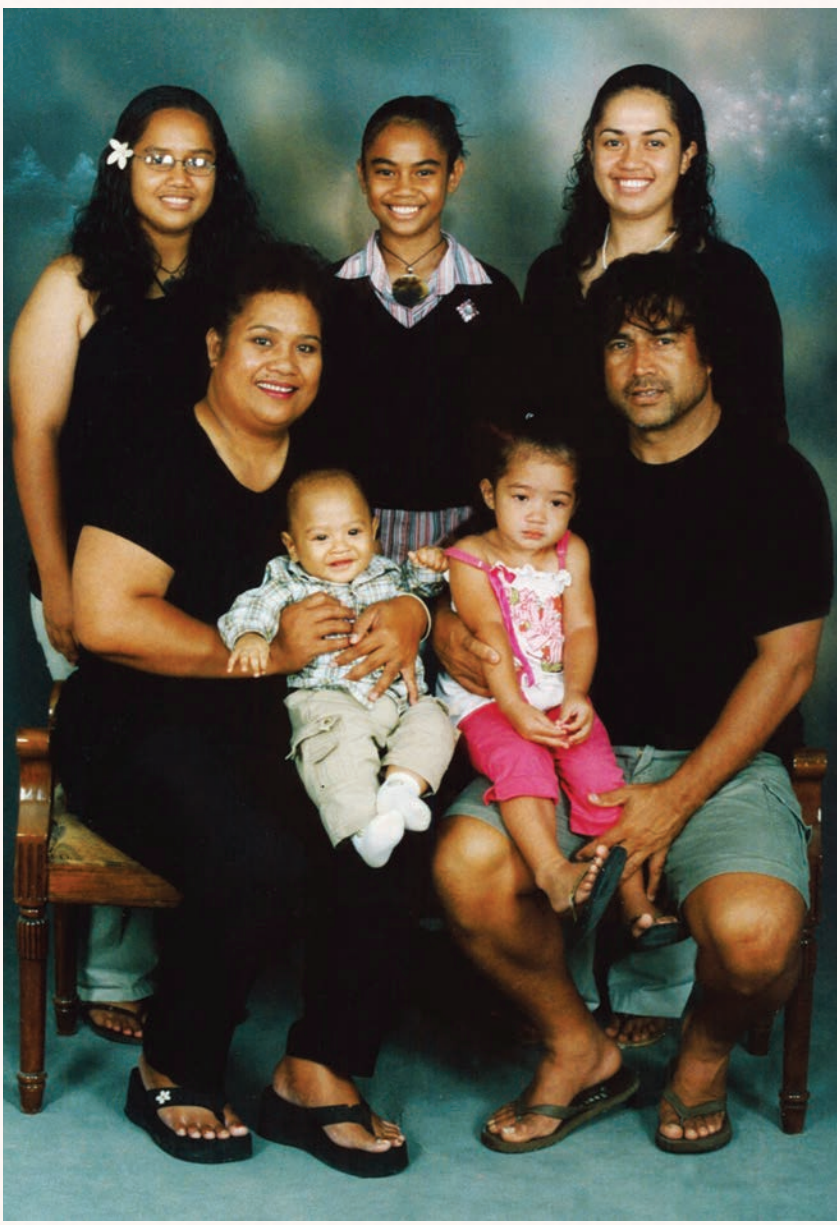
ROSELYN B. MONROYO
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

SAIPAN TRIBUNE



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

That's how sports are for the Rangamars.

The father, Elias or Eli, is a coach and official of various local sports associations, while the mother, Dolores, and the couple's three grown children—Lei, Rachel, and Lia—are athletes. The family's "home" is the Oleai Sports Complex where the couple's two other children—4-year-old Bwilitomwar and 6-year-old Neisuupi—spent their toddler years watching and cheering their sisters and parents in competitions.

Together, the Rangamars have brought pride and honor to the CNMI by winning in tournaments and assisting in the organization of various events in the Commonwealth, while enjoying family life lived in the demanding world of sports.

Encourage but don't force

"I've never forced my kids into sports. But once I see the interest and commitment at a later age, I encourage them and expect dedication and commitment like the rest of my other athletes," said Eli, who use to play pick-up games with his children and other family members. "Sports is just one of the many avenues for developing and molding our children into mature and responsible human beings. Play with your kids first whenever possible and encourage free play. Developing motor skills first before sports skills at an early age will help your child accelerate his or her development and transition easier into team or individual sports. Remember, kids grow up fast, so play, enjoy, and ➜

TOP: Dolores Rangamar, left, and daughter, Lia, pose with their medals during the 2006 Micronesian Games on Saipan. **LEFT:** The Rangamar family, standing from left, Rachel, Lia, and Lei. Seated from left, Dolores, Bwilitomwar, Neisuupi, and Elias.

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SAIPAN TRIBUNE

TOP: Coach Elias Rangamar, standing left, joins the CNMI Women's National Basketball Team for a group photo after beating Palau in the gold medal game in the 2006 Micronesian Games at the Marianas High School Gymnasium. **ABOVE:** Lia Rangamar exchanges high-fives with her teammates and coaching staff during a break in the CNMI 's gold medal game against Palau in the 2006 Micronesian Games at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

spend tons of time with them whenever you can."

Eli could not recall who among Lei, Rachel, or Lia got into sports first but remembers that it was his wife who was really active in sports.

Dolores seconded this, saying that she played softball and volleyball and was also into athletics from elementary to high school.

It wasn't hard to sustain her passion for sports after getting married since her husband was also her coach and No. 1 supporter. Soon enough, their first three children got involved in sports too, practically growing up while joining one competition after another at the Oleai Sports Complex.

"Lei and Rachel's first track experience was with one our former middle distance coach, Mr. Tom Gibson. Lei loved volleyball but her success came with track and field in the throwing events. Both Lei and Rachel were actually coached by Mr. Bobby Winkfield during their high school years. For Rachel, her passion was and still is basketball. Lia is probably the better all-around basketball player, but Rachel is the better shooter... I can just see Lia calling up Rachel, challenging her to a game of one-on-one after reading this," Eli laughed.

Lia, who is also into soccer and volleyball, did not need any word of encouragement from her dad to get into sports, as seeing the entire family play was enough to convince her to join competitions.

"While watching them play, I wanted to grow up faster so I could get a chance at competing too," Lia said.

Equal treatment

When coaching her three daughters and wife, Eli treats them the way he handles his other athletes.

"Every athlete is unique. They have their own set of characters, personalities, physical attributes, and goals. I think half the time I spend coaching is spent on appraising these four areas," Rangamar said.

Lei, being the eldest and the first to be coached by his dad, can attest to Eli's treatment of athletes.

"My dad started getting me into the throwing events a little into my junior high years. He was my main mentor during my initial venture into throwing events. However, I'm the most sensitive of all my sisters so having my dad grill me and coach me was pretty hard. I didn't feel like an athlete when he'd try to correct me, I felt more like a berated daughter! He expects everyone to perform to the best of their abilities and everyone is treated the same…including me, which, for an athlete is totally fair," Lei said.

"Although I trained with different coaches, my dad has always been the constant and steady force behind everything. He has always been the person who pushed me to never give up. Even if I wasn't the star player, I pushed myself to perform to the best of my abilities. He had us setting our own personal standards so that we knew when we weren't giving it 100 percent. ➜

CNMI DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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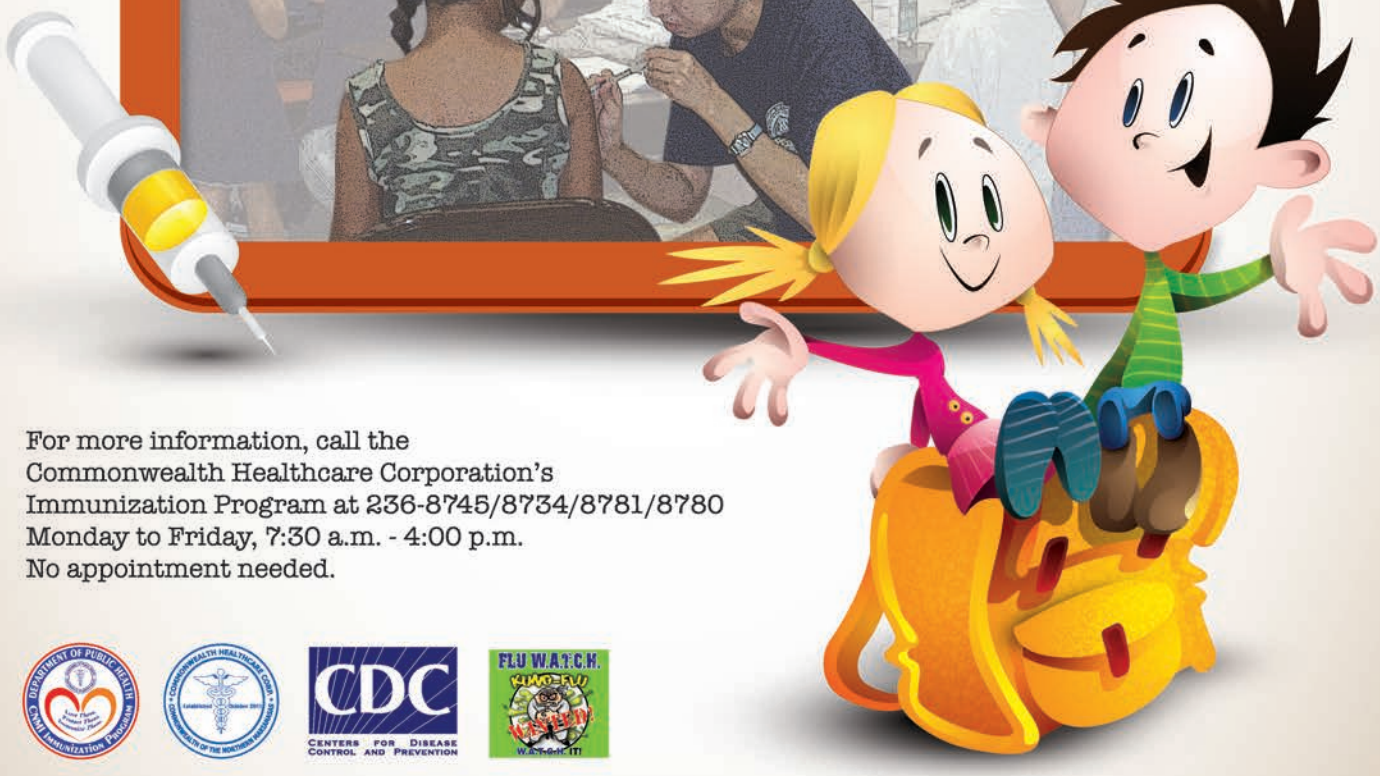

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This mentality also crossed into my studies," the eldest daughter added.

Rachel, the second child, has nothing but praise for the coach who spends a lot of time with his athletes.

"Dad is probably the most patient man I know. I know I didn't make parenting very easy, but he still taught me many valuable things on and off the court. He spends lots of time with his athletes individually. I've seen some athletes go from nobodies to some of the best in Micronesia," Rachel said.

"After the games, he'd sometimes give me pointers on areas that need improvement. So when it came to playing for him there wasn't much pressure because he treated everyone the same [way]. If there was something in my game that needed correction, he'd tell me," she added.

At home, everybody also gets equal treatment.

"My parents did a good job dividing their attention amongst us so we didn't see fit to compete for any," Lia said.

Bonding time

For a regular family, one way to spend time together is over dinner in the comfort of home or in a restaurant. The Rangamars had dinners, too, but theirs were mostly spent on the bleachers of the Ada gym.

"Having Eli close the gym after the game or having either one of us play late has made our family dinners a unique experience. We usually eat at the stands and bring bento," Dolores said. "There are times when we would pack our food and eat on the way to the tournament."

The family also bonds while playing with or against each other.

"I enjoy playing basketball with Rachel. We can confront each other on the court and not worry about feelings getting hurt. We grew up playing one-on-one almost every day at the Ada gym. We got extremely competitive with one another, trash talking each other, but we knew it was all fun and games. There have been so many times that I've had to borrow my sisters' shoes, socks, or hair tie. They were probably really annoyed, but I'm sure they still love me," Lia said.

While Lia played one-on-one against Rachel, Lei had opportunities to team up with their mom in volleyball competitions.

"I played with my mom in some volleyball tournaments like the Jam Attack," Lei recalled.

Cheering for family members playing in a tournament and waiting for everybody to come home strengthen their ties, too.

"In evenings when I was scheduled to close up for basketball or baseball or whenever my team plays, they were always there to watch. At times, they would be in the conference room doing their homework and watching TV. By the time the games were over, which back then

SAIPAN TRIBUNE

Husband and wife, Elias, and Dolores Rangamar join the parade of nations during the opening of the 2006 Micronesian Games at the Oleai Sports Complex.

was usually after 11pm, they'd all be fast asleep and I have to pick them up one by one and put them in the car," Eli said.

At home, they talk about funny mishaps or situations that happen during games, tournaments or camps.

Represent

The parade of nations in the 2006 Micronesian Games on Saipan was a sight to behold for the Rangamars.

The entire family was part of the CNMI Team, with Lia, Lei, Rachel, and Dolores representing the Commonwealth in the athletics competition and Eli coaching the home squad.

Dolores said that was one of the proudest moments for the family.

"There is always pride in representing the CNMI. We all competed in the Micro Games and the 2005 Micronesian Games (also on Saipan) under Eli," said the 43-year-old mother, who won the silver medal in the discus throw in the Micro Games.

"Having the chance to compete and participate with my whole family (including cousins Leroy and Sylvan) was surreal. We even had some of my uncles and aunties volunteering as officials," said Lei, who also joined several throwing events.

Lia, who was then 12 years old when Saipan hosted the 2006 Micro Games, did not take a gold medal in the athletics competition, but got the elusive gold with the CNMI Basketball Team that beat Palau in the finals.

"It was the first time the CNMI women's basketball team garnered a gold medal. It was a great experience. At 12, it was my first big competition and I had the opportunity to play with some of the best female basketball players the CNMI ever had. I was especially nervous coming into the first game, but it was definitely comforting having my dad right there on the bench. Before being my coach, he made sure he fulfilled his role as dad first, giving me support and ensuring I had as much confidence in myself as he had," the 18-year-old Lia said.

"I always remember him telling me to never doubt my capabilities, make myself dangerous, and forget about what the crowd thinks and do what's best for me and the team," she added.

Legacy

Only Lia and Eli are on Saipan now, as Lei and Rachel are working in Hawaii and Dolores is with them, taking care of her grandchildren (Lei's two kids) as well as Bwilitomwar and Neisuupi.

Though hundreds of miles apart, Eli is not worried for his children, as he knows he and Dolores have instilled in them the values that would guide them in their lives.

"It's been said that children are a reflection of their parents and I think I and my wife are proud of the way we've raised our children. They're always respectful and considerate of others and value education," Eli said.

Lia, who graduated with honors from Marianas High School this year, will soon be leaving Saipan, too, to continue her studies and hopefully earn an athletic scholarship.

"First and foremost, her education is the priority. Sports is just one of the many avenues that can get you through college and she has that opportunity. People like to talk about her sports accomplishments, but Lia is an honor student and puts in more time in her studies than sports. She understands that her career in sports is not going past college but she wants to try out the culture of being a student athlete in college," Eli said.

As for Lei, her focus now is on her own family and, though she is not sure if she will try coaching someday, she wants her children to be involved in sports too.

"Looking back, I am so grateful to have so many opportunities while competing. I was able to learn discipline and teamwork through sports. I made so many new friends. I traveled to different places. I want that for my two boys, J.J. and Kameron, to have every opportunity available to succeed and improve. Playing sports was not only fun, it was hard work and I want them to have that good work ethic," Lei said.

Seeing her dad's experiences as a coach lets Lia imagine taking on the role someday.

"Growing up under dad's instruction, I have seen him radiate a sense of pride each time he meets former athletes he coached in the past who have gone on to become successful athletes and coaches in their own right. His observation of their accomplishments through years of mentoring and coaching made all the hard work and time he sacrificed worthwhile. For that reason, I don't see why I should not try coaching someday," Lia said.

By then, she will be able to bring with her all the lessons she has learned from her parents in the past 18 years.

United States Congressman
Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan
Serving the people of the Northern Mariana Islands

Greetings!

As your representative in Congress, I introduce legislation in Washington to benefit our islands and I vote on issues that affect our future. Additionally, I can assist you in finding answers to questions and getting help with the issues you may have with federal agencies.

I have put together this guide to constituent services to give you an idea of the aid your congressional office can provide.

Please don't hesitate to call, write, e-mail, or stop by our offices on Saipan, Tinian and Rota and at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C.; we're here to help you!

Sincerely, Kilili

LIST OF SERVICES:

Helping you with your interactions with federal agencies is a big part of my job.

Here are some of the areas in which your congressional offices most often provide help:

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- Federal Student Aid
- Veterans' Benefits
- Military Service Problems
- Federal Grants
- Immigration Concerns
- Passport and Visa Applications
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- Capitol & Washington, D.C. Tours
- U.S. Flag Requests
- Congressional Commendations
- Internships
- Presidential Greetings
- Federal Employee Issues
- Disaster Assistance
- U.S. Service Academy Nominations

Student Services

We can provide information about federal financial aid programs available to college students and their families. We also offer internships for college students who want to learn about the workings of a congressional office.

Veterans

If you have served our nation, your congressional office can assist you with inquries about your pension or other benefits to which you are entitled, as well as recover service medals earned.

Visiting the Capitol

Constituents from the Northern Mariana Islands who plan to visit the Washington area can obtain information on tours and places of interest. We can help you make your trip more rewarding by arranging tours of the White House, the U.S. Capitol, and the Supreme Court. Give us plenty of advance notice and be sure to visit your congressional office at 423 Cannon House Office Building.

Senior Citizens

I can help you determine what services Medicare covers, assist with reimbursement problems, and inquire about overdue Social Security payments for disabilities, Supplemental Security Income, survivor, and retirement benefits.

U.S. Service Academy Nominations

Each year, based on merit, I can nominate students from the Northern Mariana Islands to the U.S. Service Academies, where you can earn a college degree and become a commissioned officer in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, or Merchant Marines. Contact us early in your junior year to begin preparing to apply.

Commendations & U.S. Flags

As a service to constituents, your congressional office can provide commendations for special people and events. You may also order a United States Flag that has been flown over the Capitol Building. These flags can be flown in honor, or memory of a person, or special occasion and may be flown on a specific date. A certificate of authenticity is included with each flag.

United States Congressman Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan

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learning the ropes of water polo

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

Looking for a challenge?

Go to the Kan Pacific Swimming Pool in Marpi where Saipan Swim Club and coach Jeff El-Hajj are trying to revive interest in water polo and experience what it's like to play what's been described as the toughest sport in the world, at least according to online publication *Bleachers Report*.

You may scoff but try treading water for hours, swimming as fast as you can while holding a ball with one hand, and getting your eyes splashed with chlorinated water as you fight for possession and go for the goal.

Water polo, according to El-Hajj, a former University of Southern California standout, is the most challenging yet rewarding sport he's ever played and he is happy to pass on his knowledge so that others can have positive experiences with the sport as well.

Young swimmers and masters members of Saipan Swim Club and Tsunami Saipan Swimming Center are right now taking part in free introductory lessons and are enjoying action at the pool.

El-Hajj hopes that he and the Saipan Swim Club are setting the foundation now so that the children they teach will grow and improve their skills and continue playing at the collegiate level or become coaches themselves.

Water polo was last played on Saipan more than two decades ago and, with El-Hajj and Saipan Swim Club re-introducing it to the island, TAGA *Sports* decided to discuss the basics of what is billed as one of the first sports featured in the modern Olympics.

Tsunami Saipan Swimming Center's Ryosei Toda, left, looks for a teammate to pass the ball while Mark Maestro, right and Saipan Swim Club's Kento Akimaru try to stay on their defensive spots during a scrimmage at the Kan Pacific Swimming Pool in Marpi. **INSET:** Saipan Swim Club and Tsunami Saipan Swimming Center members gather for a group photo before a scrimmage at the Kan Pacific Swimming Pool in Marpi.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

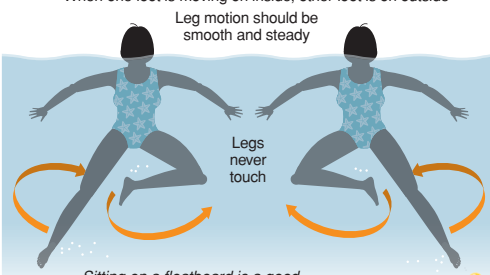
To tread water, learn this kick

Treading water is swimming in place with the face above water, and many trainers say that the "eggbeater kick" is the key to doing it well.

Doing the eggbeater kick

1 Float in a sitting position in water
Back straight
Knees bent at 90-degree angle
Thighs parallel to the surface of water

2 Move left foot clockwise and right foot counterclockwise
When one foot is moving on inside, other foot is on outside



Sitting on a floatboard is a good way to practice the eggbeater kick

Arms are not used, are free to do lifesaving or play sports such as water polo

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Graphic: Helen Lee McComas, Paul Trap

Source: Craig Wilson's Guide to Waterpolo Goalkeeping, Go Swim Productions

ORIGINS

Water polo originated in Great Britain in the 19th century with swimming instructor and coach William Wilson of London formulating the first rule of the sport. It was first called "water rugby" as rugby players played in rivers and lakes in England and Scotland. The name was then changed to "water polo" based on the English pronunciation of the Balti word for ball, "pulu." (Balti was the language spoken in Gilgit Baltistan, Pakistan.)

The game is played by swimming, passing the ball, and scoring goals.

THE FIELD

The standard water polo field measures 30 by 20 meters for men and 25 by 20 meters for women, with the water at least 1.8-meter deep and two goal posts and crossbar at each end. The field is divided into zones:

Goal line: The white mark in the course where goals are only counted if the ball goes completely across the goal line and into the goal.

2-meter line: The red mark in the course where no offensive player is allowed to swim inside the line unless he/she has possession of the ball.

5-meter line: The yellow mark in the course. If a defensive player commits a foul inside this line, the offensive team is awarded a penalty throw. If an offensive player is fouled outside the line, he may pick up the ball and take a quick shot at the opponent's goal.

Midpool or center line: This is where the game starts. After each goal is scored, play begins here.

THE EQUIPMENT

Goal: One goal is positioned at each of the far end of the field. Each goal measures 3 meters wide and 90 centimeters high.

Ball: It weights between 400 to 450 grams and is usually yellow in color so it can be easily seen. Size of the ball for men's, women, and junior games differ.

Cap: It is a headgear use to protect the ears from injuries. They are numbered to identify the players.

Mouth guard: It is used to protect the players' teeth.

Swimwear: Men wear swim briefs or Speedos, while women's must have one-piece swimsuit without straps.

THE PLAYERS

Each team in a water polo game has seven players.

Goalie or the goaltender is in charge of blocking shots from the opposing team and making long passes on counter attacks. He is the only player in the game that can use both hands to handle the ball but is prohibited from crossing the midpool.

Center or the hole set is in charge of directing an attack against other team's goal and is positioned in front of the other opposing team's goalie or near the 2-meter line.

Wings or the (2) low wings are perimeter players usually positioned at the left and right side of the center. They are the fast swimmers–called drivers–in the game as they run after the ball and get open for passes and shots.

Flats or the (2) top wings are also perimeter players/drivers and have similar tasks as those of the low wings, but they are positioned near the 5-meter line.

Point is the defensive safety player at the pool. He is positioned just a little outside the 5-meter line and with his place in the water he is usually the first back on defense.

THE BASIC RULES

1. The six field players are allowed to pass or hold the ball using only one hand. No striking of the ball using a clenched fist. Only the goalie is allowed to use both hands and strike the ball using a clenched fist while within the 5-meter area.
2. No holding of the ball underwater.
3. No walking (only the goalie is allowed if he is inside the 5-meter line), so the six field players must tread water.
4. Each team has 35 seconds to make a shot. One game is played in four 8-minute periods. The team to score the most goals after four periods wins the game.
5. In case of a tie after the regulation, the game will be played in two 3-minute overtime periods. If the game is still deadlocked, a penalty shootout will be in effect with each team selecting five players to attempt for a goal.
6. In case of a minor or ordinary foul (most common is impeding the free movement of a player), the offensive team is either given a free throw or a direct shot outside the goal (if the foul is committed outside the 5-meter line). There is no limit for minor fouls but three major or exclusion fouls (e.g., holding, sinking, or pulling back a player who is not holding the ball) is equivalent to expulsion from the game. A player charged with an exclusion foul must leave the game for 20 seconds with no substitute in that time frame. Examples of minor, major, and penalty fouls in water polo are detailed in the U.S. water polo and FINA websites, www.usawaterpolo.org and www.fina.org.

THE SKILLS

El-Hajj enumerated three basics skills for water polo beginners.

Eggbeater kick: Water polo requires players to tread water for much of the game. The eggbeater kick is the most efficient way to tread water and it is the first thing coaches teach to new players. It is done with the swimmer bending at the waist as if sitting in a chair, bending the knees, swiveling both feet in circles opposite each other with the left foot moving clockwise and the right counterclockwise, and kicking harder to raise the body out of the water

Passing: After learning the eggbeater kick, players then need to learn to support themselves using the eggbeater kick while handling and passing the water polo ball (with only one hand at a time). Coordinating arms and legs for this process takes a great deal of practice. There are two basis passes–the wet and dry passes. A wet pass is a deliberate pass into the water and is not caught by the hand outright, while a dry one means the ball does not touch the water and goes straight to a receiver's hand.

Shooting: It requires skill to shoot the ball at high speed while still maintaining accuracy. Properly utilizing the entire body rather than just the shoulder and elbow is crucial. Strong wrists and follow through after the shot are key to great shooting. TS

A league of their own

WALTER CEPEDA SUTHERLAND
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

Baseball teams come and go throughout the years and gone are some of the older banners such as the Garapan Pirates and the Patriots. Although a few originals remain like the San Roque D-9ers and the Tanapag Falcons, there are always new affiliates sprouting up, like the Enforcers and the Hunters. This story picks up from where our team feature left off in the October 2011 edition of TAGA *Sports*. In that edition, we featured basketball teams. This time, we turn out attention to baseball's Little League.

OL'ACES

The Ol'Aces name was borrowed from some Oleai-based basketball teams that were started way back in 1972 by Tony Satur, Jess Wabol, Elmer Sablan, and Elias Rangamar, to name a few.

Its namesake expanded into Little League in the 1990s and was well-received by the baseball community. In a short time, the Ol'Aces have become a staple of the little league program, boasting multiple Major, Junior, Senior, and Big division championships over the years.

The Ol'Aces raised a championship and pennant banner in the Senior division this season, while its Big Leaguers were crowned league champions just last year. Its junior leaguers took the pennant this year as well and its major division team earned division title back in 2010.

Tony Flores, Nick Garreon, Evelyn Borja, Walter Macaranas, Ryan Mitsutani, and Mark Flores front the band.

Although coined as an Oleai-based team, its players come from all parts of the island.

FIELDERS

The Fielders started back in 1998 when they suited up for the Field's Fencing Co. and, though backed now by IT&E, kept their original name.

Now fronted by founding father Patrick Tenorio with John Manibusan, Juan Iguel, and Tony Rogolifoi, the Fielders started out as just one major division team that have since expanded into all four divisions; they also won a Saipan Major League Baseball Association adult title in 2010.

Though they came up short this time around, all in all it's still been a sweet ride for the group of late with their junior leaguers hoisting the big trophy in 2011 and their Senior division finishing runners up in 2010 and 2011; their senior division won the pennant in 2010.

McDonald's has traditionally represented the Fielders in the Major division.

KAGMAN LIONS

Kagman teams used to be labeled numerically and were shortly known as the Aztecs until the notion of the Lions stuck six years ago. The pride has routinely bannered squads in the Junior, Senior, and Big League divisions, and in the last two years it recently added the Major division Kagman Little Legals to its showcase.

The Lions won back-to-back senior division titles in 2010 and 2011, and raised the junior league trophy back in 2008.

This season marked a transition year for the Lions and staff members Syl Ada, Ray Santos, and Smith Regis, whose rosters were filled by some young talented first-year players across the board.

JETS

The Jets are one of the longest running active groups in the Saipan Little League Baseball Inc. and fielded three teams this year. The Jets went undefeated in the Major division in 2011 and have graduated to the Junior level this time around. They are also suiting up two rosters in the Senior division, one of which advanced into the post-season as did their junior league squad.

The Jets are coached by Juan K. Tenorio, Manuel Sablan, Marvin Kaipat, and Derron Flores.

HUSTLERS

The Hustlers also started in the mid-'90s and primarily field players from San Antonio, Koblerville, and Lower Dandan. Its Senior League unit holds a pair of pennant titles under its belt and its Big Leaguers boast four. The Hustlers suited up for just the big division this year and clinched its first title; Joe Flores, Frank Hocog, and Audi Maratita coach the squad.

The Big League Hustlers finished runners-up to the Ol'Aces for the past two years and finally got over the hump against their rivals back in May.

ENFORCERS

The Enforcers are one of the young guns of the SLLBI and came to the scene with guns blazing with a third place finish in their 2011 major division debut. In just their second year, the Enforcers have assembled a three-headed monster in the Major, Junior, and Senior divisions.

The Enforcers were also in a rebuilding year this season, but their Major division team still made some noise in the playoffs this year and settled for a fourth place showing.

Lawrence Camacho, Ray Pangelinan, Joaquin Saralu, Henry Lizama, Lloyd Tarope, and Ray Itibus lead the crews.

FALCONS

The Talaabwogh Falcons have been another staple team from the north that finished runners up in the Major and Senior divisions this year. Their Junior league team also made it to the playoffs, which gives all of their teams some positives to take with them into next season. Notably, they were fortunate to receive some pitching tips from CNMI national team standout Joshua Jones during spring training this year. Isidoru Camacho, Roque Magofna, Vince Camacho Jr., Joseph Lifoifoi, Manny Evangelista, and Dodet Feliciano all coach the group.

WILD CARDS

Some other up-and-coming major division teams to watch out for include the reigning champion Dandan Comets and third place Koblerville Rays.

Other developing groups from the past few years include the Red Sox who flag teams in both the Major and Junior divisions and the Hunters who showcase Senior and Big League squads. Notably, the Hunters' affiliate, Red Sox, finished second place in the Major division in 2011 and won this year's Junior title over the Ol'Aces in dramatic fashion.

I got shot and lived to tell the tale

WALTER CEPEDA SUTHERLAND
TAGA Sports Staff Writer

The Saipan Paintball Association started in 2004 and was popularized by its monthly "speedball" matches held along Middle Road, and though the early craze died out about five years ago, the SPA itself did not fade away. Rather, its spirit lives on through a new generation of regulars that enjoy a different type of paintball experience known as "woodsball."

I was introduced to paintball, and woodsball in particular, last month and quickly learned that it requires a lot of patience, some crafty communication, and a lot of balls.

Admittedly, I stayed pretty well hidden early on, but never got the hand signals down and basically had to wing it all day off the adrenaline rush that went through my body on multiple occasions.

The venture started after meeting up with SPA's Ray Angeles, Rommel and Sherwin Dizon, Ferdie Generoso, Robert Moreno, and Ivan Sales at the old radar tower in As Matuis.

The first thing we did was go over the safety rules of both the equipment and the games. Some important rules include: always keep the rifle on "safety" until the start of each game; never take off your mask during the game; when a player is hit they must raise up their rifle and call out "hit" to signal that they are out; and be a good sport about it. Safety and sportsmanship are very important to ensure that everyone has fun.

JUST SO YOU KNOW

Back in the speedball days, six teams each with up to eight players competed in five-on-five "capture the flag" tournaments.

In "capture the flag" matches, dueling teams started out in designated flag positions located at opposite ends of the playing area. The object of the game was to steal the other team's flag and return it back to the corresponding team's flag spot. A team's flag must also be secured at home base in order for the point to be counted. Shooting everyone on the other team for a walk-off win was also a common result.

During this debriefing, I couldn't help but notice how everyone's equipment looked remarkably similar to real military tackle.

The guys were nice enough to lend me some extra equipment they brought along and geared me up with an authentic camouflage army coat, a protective mask, gloves and kneepads, and a 0.68-caliber high-powered speedball rifle.

They then let me test out the gun to get a feel for the piece and, yes, I did jump a little bit the first couple of times I pulled the trigger on that thing. After seeing the paintballs splat against a wall about 20 feet away I gulped and knew right away that it was going to be a very interesting day.

After the guys decided who was going to get the newbie, we broke away to our respective ends of our designated battle zone. We were playing a simple offense versus defense match where our team represented the attackers with a one-man advantage. The objective was to infiltrate an abandoned building and its surrounding area that was designated as the defending team's base.

When the defenders were ready and in position, they called out to start action and, just like that, it was game on.

Woodsball is a lot like hunting because, ideally, you don't want anyone to know you are even there. It takes a lot of patience and scouting as to where the defenders may be hiding. Like hunting, not blowing one's cover is key because once seen it only takes seconds to end up in a definite standoff.

After hearing the call to start play, starting from the west we snuck east through a small patch of jungle up to the west side of the base and split up along both sides of the wall and elected to advance toward the east end from both sides.

It took me about 10 minutes just to move →

JUN FERNANDEZ

Ivan Sales takes aim at an opponent during a game at the Top Shot Playstation shooting range in Sadog Tasi.

JUN FERNANDEZ

TOP: Participants in a woodsball competition take cover during a game at the Top Shot Playstation shooting range in Sadog Tasi. **BELOW:** Walter Sutherland, front middle, poses with SPA's, from right, Robert Moreno, and Sherwin Dizon, Ferdie Generoso, Ray Angeles, and Ivan Sales during his June 16 woodsball escapade at the old radar tower in As Matuis.

into position because I didn't even want to breathe loud in fear of getting pelted by these guys' modified artillery and crawled around as quietly as I could with a keen eye and ear on my teammates and any other suspicious movements or sounds.

We eventually regrouped at the wall and waited to make our move, and when we did a hail of gunfire rumbled through the walls of the structure just three steps after turning the corner.

The encounter took place in just seconds and ended with our team luckily having a two-to-one advantage. However the defense's sniper was hiding in the foliage away from the building and Ivan and I were not sure where he was.

We tried to wait it out in hopes that he would give away his position, but never saw or heard anything. The first match resulted in a non-climactic ending just when we were about to roll the dice and jump out in the open. We won the first game via surrender, which is actually a common occurrence.

The second game ended up being a three-on-three match because of a gun malfunction. This time Robert and I snuck around the south end, but missed out on the action. Our teammate lit up two players at the north corner and we had the defense down three to one en route to a strong win.

So I was fortunate enough to remain unscathed through the first two matches for a pair of attack victories, but was not so lucky playing defense in what was my final battle.

I started out hiding in an old rusted out metal box along the main road, waiting for the other team to come sneaking around the north side of the building, but ended up out of shooting range from inside my bunker.

I was too scared to cross the road and jump in the woods because these guys were no novices and may have popped me good, so I tried to keep myself hidden in hopes that they wander astray.

WALTER CEPEDA SUTHERLAND

Moments later, however, my teammate positioned just behind me was picked off by attackers that entered from the south side of the base and I tried to crawl along the road to avenge his loss, but was pinned down by about 50 rounds popped off from inside a nearby doorway.

Yeah, maybe my safety was on and I didn't get as many shots off as I wanted, but the thrill alone is what makes the game so intense and exciting.

I eventually had to retreat from my spot because at this time I am pretty sure I'm the last one left and when I turned tail east, Ivan was waiting for me. He busted me good on my inner thigh, causing me to cry out in defeat.

The sting was unpleasant, but actually hurt more later that evening and the next day. I think Ivan let me off easy with just a small burst, but I can only imagine what it would feel like to endure a more hefty dose of rounds.

My woodsball experience was a lot both scary and a lot of fun. It does not feel good to get nailed by a paintball gun, but the sport is about so much more than that. There is a lot of strategy, team building skills, communication, sportsmanship, exercise, and marksmanship.

For a change of scenery the group also holds games in the woods in Sadog Tasi at Top Shot Playstation with fellow SPA members John and Keoni Hosono, Lito Borja, Ray Garcia, and Jun Fernandez, among others.

The SPA is currently fronted by president Arman Salburo. However, the group is holding a general election meeting on July 7 to designate new officers. New members are always welcome and the group has equipment to lend interested potential members as they settle in and acquire their own gear. There is also a $20 annual fee to help cover operations costs such as ammo, compressed air fills, etc.

For more information, contact SPA's Ferdie Generoso at 285-9971 or visit www.cnmipaintball.com.

Sports in Schools

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

A Saipan Southern High School player beats a Marianas High School player for the rebound during their game in the Marianas Interscholastic Sports Organization Basketball League at the MHS Gymnasium.

WALTER CEPEDA SUTHERLAND
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

Gross and Smith sounds like the name of a law or accounting firm. It's not. It stands for the name of two very dedicated P.E. teachers: Nick Gross of Marianas High School and Glenn Smith of Saipan Southern High School.

Their running joke is that their organization's logo, which looks like a house, means that they're running a roofing business. They're not. Gross and Smith are the two persons behind the fledgling Marianas Interscholastic Sports Organization, the body that systematizes interscholastic sports for the CNMI Public School System.

Entering its fourth year, the Marianas Interscholastic Sports Organization, more commonly known as MISO, aims to mirror the high school sports programs in the United States.

"We want to provide meaningful athletic opportunities to the CNMI youth in an interscholastic setting," said Gross, who is the acting MISO president.

MISO currently has about 800 students participating in its program. It started out offering just one sport in 2008, basketball, but now features nine different sports throughout the school year at the high school level. The additional sports include cross-country running, soccer, volleyball, outrigger canoe, baseball, softball, golf, and track and field.

MISO plans to introduce two sports at the junior high school level, with basketball, soccer, and volleyball being expanded to the elementary level.

In the future, MISO would like to add a modified triathlon season (swimming, biking, running) and hopefully put on a season-end awards banquet for all participating student athletes.

Despite the hundreds of students under the program, MISO runs on only $75,000 a year and is always in need of more parent volunteers and coaches.

They currently work with the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs, Northern Marianas Athletics, the Basketball Association of the NMI, the NMI Football Association, the NMI Volleyball Association, Marianas High School (gym), Hopwood Junior High School (soccer field), Coral Ocean Point, and Laolao Bay Golf Resort.

Notably, physical education in the CNMI is only offered in seventh grade for only one semester at the junior high level, and offers P.E. at the high school level for three quarters over the students' four-year tenures.

"More opportunities for physical activity are needed in and out of the Public School System in order to combat diabetes and other health related risks linked to lack of exercise," said Gross and Smith.

Other benefits that come from the program include a more positive social interaction with others, filling leadership roles, learning the importance and effectiveness of teamwork, and building students' self esteem.

As the program has grown over the years, so has its workload. In order to operate efficiently, MISO needs more coaches, referees, and game officials and must cover various general maintenance expenses such as painting soccer fields and setting up volleyball fields, to name a few.

These expenses are currently covered by the Public School System but MISO lacks funds to acquire roles such as athletic directors, an official secretary, an accounting department, improvements in communication, and general office supplies.

Gross is mulling the idea of getting more grant funds for the program. "We greatly appreciate everything that PSS federal programs officer Tim Thornburgh has done to help our program come along since its inception. Still we would like to apply for more grants to help boost the program, but we do not have the time to address the issue currently because we are very busy throughout the year being on-site, conducting all of the activities," he said.

If there was more involvement from the community then perhaps Gross could look into the grant-writing issue instead of monitoring all of the events in person throughout year. MISO welcomes anyone with grant writing experience who wishes to offer some goodwill advice.

More parents in the program could also help with carpooling and transportation issues, which are among the big daily expenses that deter athletes from holding practices or even showing up on game dates.

Gross and Smith routinely express the importance of scheduled practice time and encourage all athletes to dedicate themselves to a training routine.

The pair was quick to emphasize, however, that at the end of the day, the kids will always be students first before being athletes.

"Students who participate in our program must have a GPA of 2.25 and no failing grades and are also required to get a sports physical to ensure they are fit to participate," said the two.

Due to many families' low economic situation, this is also often the only time students see a doctor for a routine checkup, according to them.

All in all the MISO program has germinated pretty well in just three years and another action-packed season is in the mix this fall as the high school cross-country, girls' basketball, and boys' soccer and volleyball kick off MISO's fourth installment of sports activities in September.

Saipan International School's Amber Roberts, right, tries to block Grace Christian Academy's Michiko Tenorio during their game in the Marianas Interscholastic Sports Organization Volleyball League at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

WALTER CEPEDA SUTHERLAND

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS/MARK RABAGO

TOP: Jungmun Chung revels in finally coming back home on Saipan as he poses at Banzai Cliff in Marpi last February. **INSET:** Jungmun Chung cheers for the CNMI national triathlon team at Pacific Harbor Beach in Fiji during the triathlon competition of the 2003 Suva South Pacific Games.

from korea with love

MARK RABAGO
TAGA *Sports* Associate Editor

Long before Ji Hoon Heo and Thea Minor wowed tennis sages in the region, there was Jungmun Chung.

As a 16-year-old, Chung represented the CNMI in the 2003 South Pacific Games in Suva, Fiji and a couple of years later was ranked the No. 1 junior tennis player in the CNMI, just before he left for college in South Korea.

Fast-forward to 2012 and the now 25-year-old Chung is in his final year of college at the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology. In an email to TAGA *Sports*, Chung said he initially majored in Materials Science and Engineering but shifted to Industrial Design during his sophomore year at KAIST.

He would take a break from school in 2010 and 2011 for compulsory military service in the Republic of Korea Armed Forces and only resumed his college education earlier this year.

Chung said he's already looking forward to graduating from college and landing a good job either in South Korea or the United States.

"I am currently studying Industrial Design, and I want to work as a user experience designer in a large design firm," he said.

As far as playing tennis, though, a herniated disc waylaid his advancement in the sport and cost him the chance to play competitively in college.

"I hurt my back while playing tennis in 2006, which kept me away from playing tennis for several years. I really struggled as I was forced to stay away from playing tennis. I couldn't even jog, and I thought I was never going to be able to play tennis ever again. Now I have recovered from the injury and I try to play once in a while," said Chung.

Just before he injured his back, Chung was fully ➜

engaged in the sport and even enjoyed quasi-celebrity status in school after competing in tennis tournaments that netted him a championship.

"It was a memorable experience being a freshman and being new to the school and get the attention, with all the professors, employees, and masters students participating in the event. It was not long after this tournament that I encountered the injury, which really cost my college tennis life," he said.

■■■■

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS/MARK RABAGO

TOP: Jungmun Chung dons the CNMI colors while posing with the CNMI national triathlon team along with other members of the CNMI delegation to the 2003 Suva South Pacific Games. **ABOVE:** Jungmun Chung at the Last Command Post in Marpi.

At the 2003 Suva South Pacific Games, the then Marianas Baptist Academy sophomore acquitted himself well playing alongside teammates Jeff Race, Todd Montgomery, Peter Sinclair, and Kana Akaka.

He won his debut in the quadrennial event after beating a player from Tuvalu twice his age. His singles run, however, ended when a ranked Frenchman from New Caledonia outlasted him in the second round.

The same fate befell Chung partnering with Sinclair in the doubles, falling in the second round against a pair from New Caledonia.

While he won the same number of games he lost in the doubles and singles (2-2) in Suva, Chung endeared himself not only to his teammates but also to the crowd with his sound fundamentals, enthusiasm, and never-say-die attitude.

Back home, Chung would take a break from tennis for several months before returning with mixed results. Three consecutive runners-up finishes in local youth tournaments almost forced him to retire prematurely from the sport.

But in June 2004—almost a year after his breakthrough performance in Suva—Chung got his redemption by winning the DFS Micronesian Junior Tennis Championship boys 18-and-under title.

That championship stands as the most significant of a dozen titles he has won in his junior tennis career.

The following year after graduating salutatorian from Marianas Baptist, the eldest son of Byungdal and Making Lee left the only place he called home to pursue higher education in South Korea.

■■■■

Until now, Chung considers the 2003 Suva South Pacific Games as his most memorable experience in the sport.

"It was a great feeling to be a part of the CNMI team, with all the athletes in many different sports. I also had the chance to compete against many advanced tennis players, and saw the best tennis players of the Oceania region all in one spot, battling it out," he said.

Ever practical, Chung said it was during and soon after the quadrennial event that his tennis powers were at their zenith.

"I saw one player's level and intensity on top of another, after another. It was a great feeling to witness many levels of skill sets in that tournament alone. I saw how great players play their game and was able to compare myself and try to improve my game as well. The 2003 South Pacific Games really opened my mind, and I realized many things in that tournament. I think in 2003, after South Pacific Games, my tennis skill set reached its peak," he added.

■■■■

It was the summer of 1998 and Chung was in sixth grade when he first picked up a tennis racquet. His mother took him and his younger brother, Inyong, to coach Jeff Race's tennis academy at the Hyatt Regency Saipan.

"When I first attended Coach Jeff's tennis lessons, there was something inside me saying, 'Wow! This is fun!' It was very challenging to swing at the ball and get it over the net. This excitement and challenge kept me going to the tennis lessons consistently and helped me to improve very fast," he said.

Race has served as a big inspiration and a big influence in Chung's life from Day 1.

"He taught me about the game, how to gain self-confidence as a tennis player, and how to win matches. He also taught me about discipline as an athlete, how to step up to another level when I needed to during training sessions preparing for the next goal or tournament. If it wasn't for Coach Jeff, I would not have experienced all the memorable moments and accomplishments as a tennis player."

■■■■

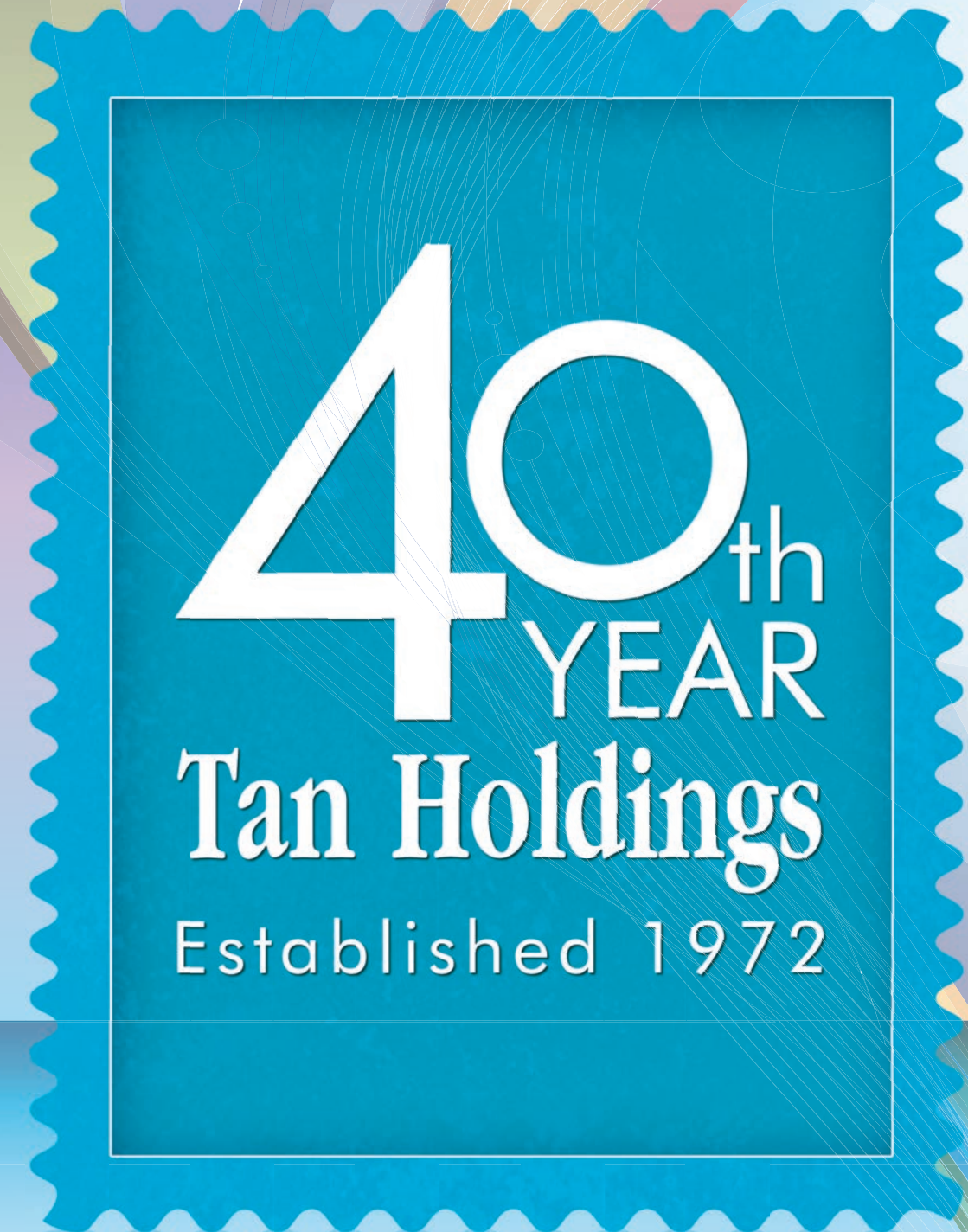
In South Korea, many of Chung's friends would ask him where he grew up and he's always been proud to answer, "Saipan."

"People really envy me when I tell them I am from Saipan because it is a hot tourist destination spot. Many people have a good impression of Saipan and they want to come over."

Seven years away from Saipan also hasn't diminished Chung's love and longing for his adopted island.

In fact, he still considers the island his hometown. His parents still live here as his father runs a math academy called The Pen. Chung last visited home in February 2012.

"I miss the beautiful beaches and sunsets of Saipan; I miss Managaha especially. I am really blessed that I got to grow up in such a beautiful island. I also miss the barbecues along Beach Road and the food at the [Garapan] Street Market."



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